



THE
STAY
OF THE
FAITHFULL:

Together with
THE PROPERTIES
of an honest HEART.

In two Sermons.

2 Tim. i. 12.

*I know whom I have beleev'd,
and am fully perswaded, that
he is able to keep that, which I
have committed to him.*

LONDON,

Printed by M. F. for R. Dawl-
man, and are to be sold by
Thomas Nichols in Popes-
head Alley at the sign
of the Bible. 1638.

Iosiah, sonne of Ammon King of Iudah, at what time Ieremiab, and Zephaniab, did both of them joyne together, to pronounce to the people in the Name of the Lord utter destruction; I will utterly (saith he) consume all things from off the land.

In the 2 verse of this Chapter, when the Holy Ghost did see some remnants of corruption left in the time of reformation, he did looke at them as so many seeds of future desolation. And therefore both these holy Prophets, *Ieremiab* in his 25. Chap. and *Zephaniab* in his whole Prophesie,

phesie, they doe joyne together, to the pronouncing of Gods threatning for the utter confusion of face of all the people, and their sinnes.

The causes whereof *Zephany* readreth at large together with the maner of the judgements, in the former *Chapter*.

21 And in the beginning of the 2. *Chap.* hee doth in consideration thereof, turne his speech to both sorts of people; both such a part of the Nation as desired not after God; some that had no part in Religion, or the reformation of *Iosiah*; as likewise to those that were the meeke of the earth; I say,

say, he turnes his speech to both, in directing them what course they should each take, for the avoiding of those mischiefs that did hang over their heads.

To that part of the nation that was not now desired, hee directs this counsell in the first and second verses of this Chap. *Gather your selves together*, or as it is in the Originall, *Fanne your selves*, for either of both it will signifie, Gather up your selves from that loosenesse, and dissolutenesse that heretofore you have beene addicted to. *Gather up your selves, oh Nation not desired*; and here

here he presseth upon the
the Duty, from an Argu-
ment taken from the
hasting on, and break-
ing in of Gods decree;
*Before the Decree come
forth, and you passe as the
chaffe, &c.*

Having thus advised
those of the Nation that
had no desire after Reli-
gion, nor *God*; after them,
hee turnes his speech to
the *meeke of the earth*, in
the third *verse*, which I
have now read: Where-
in first he describes them,
secondly counsellis them,
and then encourageth
them to take his counsel.

He describes them by
their quality, or vertue of
meekenesse, and that in an

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eminent measure; *Yee mecke of the earth; seeke the Lord all yee mecke of the earth.*

He describes them further by their course of life; *which have wrought judgement* (saith he) *that is, which have framed your course of life according to the way, and meanes, and Law of God; who have framed yourselves, and your families, and the rest under your hands after the will of the Almighty: These are the men hee speakes to in this verse:*

And the counsell hee gives them, is to seeke:

First, *The Lord.*

Secondly, *Righteousness.*

And

And then *Meeknesse.*
Seeke the Lord (saith
he) *ye mecke of the earth,*
and *seeke righteousness:*
Though they were the
mecke of the earth be-
fore, yet seeke meekness
still; that meeknesse
whereby they might
moderate, and mortifie
their base lusts, and vile
thoughts, and affections
of anger, griefe, hatred,
&c. for meeknesse mode-
rates all these; I say the
meeknesse that is here
spoken of; *Seeke the Lord*
all ye mecke of the earth:

Thus you see first, to
whom the Prophet
speaks.

Secondly, you see what
counsell hee gives them,

*to seeke the Lord, to seeke
righteousnesse, to seeke
meeknesse.*

And then wee see further, the reason that hee gives of all, to incourage them to this work, and that taken from a possibility of their security in the time of vengeance.

*It may be you may bee hid
in the day of the Lords anger;
seeke the Lord, seeke
righteousnesse, &c.*

These words therefore are to be considered;

First, as a promise given to such as are meek ones, and that have wrought judgement, and that doe seeke the Lord. The promise made to them is this,
It may bee, you shall bee hid
in

*in the day of the Lords
wrath. You see hee doth
not speake peremptorily,
You shall assuredly bee
hid, though God could
have said so, but it may
be you shall be hid from the
destroying Angel.*

And secondly, consi-
der these words as they
are brought as an *Argu-
ment* to stir up the *mecke
of the earth*, to seeke the
Lord, and to *seeke righte-
ousnesse*; for so you are to
take them, both as a pro-
position in themselves,
and as they are a propo-
sition from whence this
inference is gathered.
*Therefore seeke the Lord
all yee mecke of the earth.*
Both these considerati-

ons doe offer to us a double Note.

Let me speake of them both shortly, as Gods assistance and the time will give leave.

The first Note you may observe hence is this ; That

Doct.

In times of publike danger, God is wont to leave even his owne meeke ones, that have wrought justice.

I say, God leaves his meeke ones, that is, his owne children, and such of them to, as are better nurtured then others; for every child of God is not endued with that meeknesse of spirit as some others be; yet I say it is Gods manner of dealing, some-

sometimes to leave his meekest servants in times of publike danger, at much uncertainty, what shall become of them.

This is evident in the Text ; *Seeke thee Lord all the meek of the earth, that have wrought judgement ;* You that were transcendently meeke, that carried the name of meeknesse all the countrey, and all the earth over ; such as had not beene used to run riot, but had wrought judgement, and had carried themselves well and wisely, had ordered themselves and their families, and whatsoever was theirs, those that he exhorts to seeke righte-

H 4 ousnesse,

ousnesse, and to seeke meeknesse, and judgement; and when they have done all that hee would have them to doe, this is all the encouragement hee gives them after all; *It may be you shall be hid, &c.* hee doth not say, In hiding you shall be hid, or certainly you shall be safe, but *it may be* you shall bee hid in the day of the Lords anger.

Joel 2.

Let me make good this truth to you from other Scriptures: When God was about to bring (as I may say) that doomy day, *Joel 2.* upon that Church and State, a day of blacknesse and darknesse, *Thou must,* saith he,
turne

turne to the Lord, even to me, with all thine heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning: Rend your hearts and not your garments, let every one turne from the evill that is in his hand: for who can tell whether the Lord will returne, and leave a blessing behinde him, Joel 2. 12, 13. as if he should say, *It may bee he will*, it is not certaine that he will doe so: at the least, wee cannot say it is peremptorily concluded, but whether hee doe or no, doe you turne to the Lord with all your heart, and put away the evill that is among you, *it may be*, the Lord may returne & leave a blessing behind him. H 5 When

Joel 2. 12,
13.

Ex. 32. 30.

When as *Moses* did expect that some grievous judgement would fall upon the Nation of *Israel* in regard of their golden Calves ; Now indeed, saith hee, you have committed a grievous and a great sinne, nevertheless I will returne and go up into the Mount to the Lord, and make intercession for you, peradventure the Lord may accept mee that you perish not, Exod. 32. 30. peradventure the Lord will: Thus you see, God leaves the Church at an uncertainty, at a hazard what hee will doe with them ; *It may be*, he will bee found of them, but if hee bee, it is more then

then the people knew ;
Peradventure I may in-
 treat God that you pe-
 rish not, saith he.

And so when GOD
 comes to talke mouth to
 mouth with his people
 (or at the lest to *Moses*,
 that he might deliver his
 word to the people)
Exod. 33. 5. The Lord
 said to *Moses*, say to *Israel*,
You are a stiffe-necked peo-
ple, I will come into the
midst of you in a moment,
and consume you ; there-
fore saith God, Pull off
thine ornaments that I may
know what to doe with
thee ; As if so bee, when
 God was so provoked,
 that he saw just reason to
 bring destruction upon
 them.

Exo. 33. 5.

them ; yet even then, hee would not so resolutely, and peremptorily expresse himselfe, that they should see no hope of deliverance ; neither would hee say upon their repentance, that hee would deliver them.

Onely *put off your ornaments*, and lay aside those things by which you solace and adorne your selves, that I may know what to doe with thee, that I may cause you to see what course it is that I will take : Hee shewes that God would not expresse himselfe plainly, that hee would not evidently speake out, but leaves it at some uncertainty

tainty to the best people of his owne, be it *Aaron*, or *Hur*, or *Iosiah*, who-soever it was among them, none should know what hee would doe ; Even the *Levites* that stood for God, and stood against the evils that the people brought upon themselves, yet notwithstanding they should not know what the Lord would doe with them, or with the Nation together.

Sometimes indeed God speaks punctually, and expressly to a people what hee will doe, and what a speciall care hee will take of his servants in ill times ; Saith God to
Baruch,

Ier. 45. 5.

Ier. 39.

Baruch, Dost thou seeke great things for thy selfe, seeke them not, *I will plant and plucke up, I build and pull downe*, but seeke not thou great things, *thou shalt have thy life for a prey*, Ier. 45. 5. And you know what message God sent to *Abimelech the Ethiopian* by *Jeremiah*, that had done a good office in the Court for the Prophet of God, Ier. 39. *I will surely deliver thee, thou shalt have thy life for a prey*; Thus GOD sometimes speaks, and speaks freely, and comforts them, that he will assuredly deliver them, and hide them in the day of his wrath.

God

God expressely tells his people, *Ezek. 11. 16.* that hee will bee a *little sanctuary* unto them in all places wheresoever they should be disposed of any of them; he would bee a little sanctuary among the Heathen, whither hee would carry them, and scatter them: It is a word of great encouragement, when it pleaseth God to expresse himselfe thus, but you see sometimes he speaks not so, but contents himselfe with these kinde of generall and doubtfull words; *It may be you shall bee hid in the day of the Lords wrath:* So that in times of publike danger, such as these, where.

*Ezek. 11.
16.*

wherein *Zephany* threatened utter destruction of the Nation in regard of some defects in *Iosiah's* reformation, when hee had stirred up all sorts, and especially *the meek of the earth* to thorow repentance, all the encouragement that hee gives even to the best is this, *It may be you shall be hid, &c.*

Do not tell me, that this word (*it may be*) hath some farther comfortable meaning in it, than I now speak of, reaching to more than a *peradventure*, or *it may be*; for though that be true, as I shal have occasion afterward to speak, yet certainly God

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tempereth his speech in the Prophet according to what he meaneth his Spirit shall speak to the consciences of his people. He will many times expresse himselfe no farther, than that they may have opportunity to ask one another, what shall become of them? what shall wee doe now in such and such a time? what course shall we take? or what think you will be the end of these things? this is all many times that God will suffer his people to reach unto, and therefore he expresseth himselfe in that language, in the tenure of these words, *It may be you shall be hid, &c.*
Would

Would you now know the reason why God will speak so in times of publique danger, when his people seeke his face, and walk themselves meekly and judiciously, & faithfully in their places, and renew their covenant with him, seeking him in every duty, and in every ordinance that hee gives them opportunity to partake of? why doth not God speak more plainly to them, but leave them thus at large, *It may be you shall be hid, &c*? what should be the reason of this manner of Gods speaking?

Reas. I.

The first reason of this kind of dealing of God, is
taken

taken from the strong hand that many times Gods best servants have in publique finnes and calamities: his dearest ones many times have a hand in setting an end publique sins, and therefore God thinks it not meet to honour them so far, as to reveale to them expresly what his holy pleasure is about them. Reade (and it is worth your reading) what the holy Ghost delivereth, *Mic. i. 4, 5.* where the Lord threatneth that he will *come downe, and the mountaines shall be molten under him.* Hee meaneth by *mountaines*, the great men of the Kingdome, as they

Mic. i. 4, 5.

Psal. 72. 3.

they are called so, *Psal.*
72. 3. The mountains shall
bring peace, and the little
hills righteousness to the
people. Men in higher
 place shall provide for
 the peace of the subjects;
 there shall not be the
 meanest officer, not the
 least molehil in place, but
 he shall bring righteous-
 nesse to the people, hee
 shall be no exactor, but a
 righteous dealer, *Psal.*
72. 3.

Psal. 72. 3.

The mountains there-
 fore being *the great men*
of a Kingdome, it is said of
 them in this place of *Mi-*
cah, they shall be *molten*
under him as waxe before
the fire, that is, there shall
 be no settledness nor con-
 stancy

stancy in their waies, they shall not stand as mountains, but as *mountaines of wax* that are easily dissolved, and are running away from their consistence. And what shall become of *the valleys*? he tels you for the valleys, that is, for *the lower sort of people*, they shall be cleft or divided: and hee tels you how, even as *waters* that are poured from a steepe place. Waters that runne high, though they be carried in a great streame, when they be united together, there is a great force in them; yet when they fall downe from a steepe place, *then*, saith God, *they are cleft in sunder*.

der, and one drop is divided from another, and they have a great deale of weaknesse; they are of no power at all, when they are cleft asunder: such shall be the *valleys*: the lower sort of people shall be as waters that fall from a high place, that are cleft in sunder, and so divided into small parts, and little drops, that there shall be no power or strength in any of them.

Now whence comes all this, that the *mountains* shall melt as waxe, and that the *valleyes* shall cleave as waters from a steepe place? God gives the reason in *vers. 5.* and it is a very strong expref-
fion

sion that the holy Ghost
useth, saith hee, *For the
transgression of Iacob is all
this, and for the sins of the
house of Israel.* Whence
commeth all this? did
not all these waters runne
when they were in high
places compact together,
or were not the moun-
tains themselves unsetled
in their disposition? No
surely saith God, that is
not the matter; or what-
soever is the matter, this
is the root of it, *For the
transgression of my people
is all this, and for the sin of
the house of Israel.* All this
was for Gods peoples
sake that lived in the
Church of Jerusalem and
Judea; for their sakes all
this

this comes to passe, that the mountaines melt like waxe, and the valleys are cleft as waters that fall from a steep place.

When *David* arose, and would needs have the *people numbred*, to the provoking of *G O D S* wrath, what saith the holy Ghost upon it, what was the cause of it, that so good a man after *Gods* own heart should so much mistake himselfe, and the safety of his people, as to number them at such a time? Saith the Text,

2 Sam. 24.

2 Sam. 24. The wrath of the Lord was provoked against Israel, and hee stirred up David to number the people. The provocations of Israel

Israel provoked God to stir up *David* to take such a course, as should bring a plague that swept away seventy thousand of the: So that you see for the iniquities of *Iacob*, and for the finnes of the house of Israel is all that evill that at any time befalls a Church or Commonwealth, and therefore it is not meet that GOD should speak all his mind plainly to those, at the least not alway, that have had their hands so much imbrued in the very sins and miseries of the times themselves.

As when the stomach is annoyed with troublesome vapours and humors,

Simile.

I mors,

mors, they easily strike into the head: even so it fared with this people. It is in every Common-wealth, as it was in *David's* Common-wealth; Israel had provoked God a thousand to one, that that people at that time were sick of the very same disease that *David* laboured on, for they began to swell in the multitude of their people, and in the strength of that multitude, and the great success which God had given *David*; hee had fought many great battels when they instead of thankfulness and meekness of heart, began to have swelling and proud

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conceits, these struck into the head, and *David* had such an apprehension too: and so hee takes a course to bring a heavy hand of God upon himselfe, and his people; *for the iniquity of the house of Iacob is all this.*

When as God would render a reason why he divided the Kingdome of *Solomon*, and parted ten Tribes of it to *Ieroboam* his servant; *Ahijah* tells him the reason, because *Solomon* had thus and thus provoked God with *Ashtaroch* and *Baal*, and some others, as it is 1 *Kings* 11. 31, 32, 33. As if he should say, the people of God, even his owne

1 King. 11.
31, 32, 33.

elect and chosen servants, their finnes many times provoke God to make the greatest changes and alterations that are at any time wrought either in a Church or Commonwealth.

When the *holy Ghost* would tell you a reason of that great change in the Christian world, where the *four Angels* should be loosed from the *river Euphrates*, as the most Interpreters (not onely the most judicious, but generally others) take it, where he would shew the reason why God let loose the *Turkes* and *Sarazins*, a barbarous people, to overcome all the Church of

of Israel, to make waste and desolate all the Sanctuary of God, I mean all the blessed Congregations of Christians; when he would render a reason of this, hee tels us in the latter end, hee would stir up a brutish people, that had eyes and see not, that had eares and heare not, that had mouths and speake not, but were rather *images* and trunks of men then men; a *barbarous nation*, that were rather bulks of men then had any spirits in them.

The reason was, because the *Christian world*, Gods own servants, were growne devout in the *worshipping of images*, for

Rev. 9. 14.

yet saith hee, *they turned not from their gods of gold, and of wood, and iron, and of stone, wherewith they had provoked God,* and so hee caused a barbarous Nation to triumph over them, *Revel. 9. 14.* So that you shall finde this ever to bee true, that the very finnes of GODS Church, especially the Elect, have commonly shattered al the good that otherwise they might have found in their places where they be.

I consider now where I speake, for I would bee loath to speake so where every man should apprehend mee, that the servants of GOD are the
greatest

greatest trespassers in a Kingdome, and that their finnes are greater then other mens be. God forbid that I should thinke so, or that any should beleeve it so ; but my meaning is to let Gods servants know, a great number wherof I hope heare me this day, that whatsoever the finnes of a Common-wealth bee, God regards not all the prophannesse, and all the wickednesse that is in a Common-wealth ; God lesse regards it, although the sinne be fouler, then hee doth even small failings in his owne servants, whose examples are such as doe leade on

further evils in a Church and Common-wealth, to the destruction both of themselves and others.

Would you know the reason why it pleased *Ged* to send a sore famine upon the land of *Canaan*, that should reach likewise to *Egypt*, so that almost there was no bread to be found six yeares together; The first yeare they made a shift, but then all their provision was spent, and the next yeare they must hasten to *Egypt* if they would live; *Why stand you gazing one upon another, saith Iacob, get you downe into Egypt and buy food*; It shewes that there was no food to be

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be had but there. What thinke you was the cause of that great distresse upon those two Nations *Canaan*, and *Egypt*? none could bee found: though the people were but smal, yet the Nations were great. Doubtlesse, *for the iniquity of the house of Iacob was that, and for the sin of the sonnes Israel.*

Because they dealt *cruelly with Ioseph*, and sold him, it was necessary that they should follow him, and goe all into *Egypt* after him; and it was necessary that they should goe by this meanes, and that captivity should bring them all to repentance; *Ioseph* so wisely

ordering the matter with his brethren, he handled them so, that he left none till hee had brought all their hearts low, by such a gracious and sweet frame, that if there were any meanes under heaven of their conversion, it was his conference and the course that hee took with them to shew them their sinne, and to bring them on to repentance.

So in a word, you that are acquainted with the Histories of the Common-wealths, with the greatest Monarchies that ever the world saw, doe you but observe them, and (you shall never understand them well, ex-

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cept you read Scriptures with them) you shall finde that the greatest Monarchies in the world have beene advanced, either for scourges to Gods Church, or else for the deliverance of his people: For your sakes, saith he, it is that I set up Babylon, and pull it downe, *Esay 43. 14.* because thou wast precious in my sight, and honourable, I have given Nations for thee, *verse 3.* The reason of all Gods Providence over the world is for his Church; and *S. Paul* tels you, that whether it bee *Paul*, or *Apello*, or *Cephas*, or the world, or whatsoever, all is yours, *1 Cor. 3. 22.*

Isai 43. 14.

Verse 3.

1 Cor. 3.
22.

3. 22. and you are Christs
and Christ is Gods ; God
so orders all States and
Common-wealths, and
the great Monarchs of
the world, all their tur-
nings to and fro, all are
ordered so farre as God
sees may bee for the
Churches good.

The Church many
times is accounted a *little
flocke*, and so it is, and is
meanely esteemed in the
world, but God hath ever
that eye to it, that for the
Churches sake he especi-
ally alters all the States,
not in Christendome on-
ly, but in the world.

That is the first reason,
why God doth thus hold
off his people from
knowing

knowing what hee will doe with them, because it is for their sakes, for their sinnes, that it comes to passe, that the Kingdomes in which they live are exposed to so much danger, and therefore it is meet, that first they should better consider themselves, before they know what the Lord will doe with them.

And a second reason may be this, That so hee might give them occasion something further to humble themselves before him, to lament their owne sinne, and to mourn for the sins of the times in which they live, and then GOD is wont to speake

Reas. 2.

Ezek. 4.

speake more comfort ; I, *Ezek. 4.* when as his people had mourned in secret, for all the abominations of the place they lived in, then God sends a man to *marke* them in *their foreheads*, and because that was but secret, *among the angels*, that is, among the Leaders of the *Babylonian Host* (for that I make account is the Prophets meaning, hee would send his angell with the *Babylonian Army*,) yet they were so guided, that victorious Nation that they hurt none of them upon whom the *marke* was set, yet hee rests himselte not with that, but hee bids the

Pro.

phet tell them, that hee would bee a sanctuary to them that did thus mourne.

Iosias began to reform most comfortably, and gloriously, so that the hearts of Gods people were refreshed marvelously, seeing so *young a Prince*, so hopefull, such an instrument of Gods service; they little considered the danger of the remnant that was left, as the Prophet speaks in the beginning of the *third Chapter* of this Prophe-
sie, 4, 5, 6. *verses*, they little considered that they had not yet begun to mourne in *Sion* for the abominations, but their
mouthes

Chap. 3.
ver. 4, 5, 6.

mouthes were full of thanksgiving, and their hearts were full of praises, and it may bee there was a little pride joyned with it too, to see so happy a state of Church and Cōmon-wealth as there was, and therefore God will not tell them what hee will doe in the times of publike calamity; they must looke backe to what they have done, or else they shall be uncertaine. Other reasons I might give you of this point, but I should hold you over long if I so did; And therefore because there is some thing further remaines to bee spoken, let me in a word make use of this. And

And it may serve to teach Gods servants, euen Gods owne elect people, *the meeke ones of the earth*, you that have wrought some judgement (taking judgement as the *Hebrew phrase* doth, for the right ordering of your selves and yours) I say, you are in the times of publike danger, whensoever your hearts put you to such stands and questions as these bee; What shall we now doe? or, what thinke you will become of us? or, what will the issue of this bee? Bee sure then to begin to thinke what the reason is, why God doth not speak plainly to you, that in delivering

Vse.

delivering he will deliver you, and hide you, whatsoever become of the body of the Nation; why doth not God, or your owne hearts say thus, or one of you speake so to another? see if it bee not because your selves have had some hand in the publike evils of the times that wee com plaine of so much. It behoves Gods people in a speciall manner to have an eye to that as ever you desire to see good dayes, and to bee secure and protected in the evill houre, be careful that you doe not onely mourne for the sinnes of the time you live in, that *God* may say to you;

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hee will bee a little sanctuary to you wheresoever you come, but bee sure you come to this passe, to see what iniquity in you might cause all those illls, that you feare at any time.

Never trouble you your selves so much with the sins of others, whatsoever they may bee, though they be never so hainous, and never so monstrous, but labour to bee exercised with your owne; for though God require that his servants should bee humbled for all the abominations that their eyes see, and that their eares heare, yet the first care that hee would have

have us take is, to pull the beame out of our own eye, that wee pull sinne and iniquity out of our own hearts, whereby the Common-wealth wherein wee doe, or may live, is like to fare the worse for our sakes.

The time was, when the enemies invaded the Kingdome of *Juda*, in *Iehosaphats* reigne, but it was in a very unhappy season for themselves, as in the *Chapter* before appeares, 2 *Chron.* 19. you shall reade that *Iehosaphat* had sent his Nobles, and the Priests through all the Cities of *Judah*, and planted faithfull *Levites* to teach the people the

2 Chro. 19

the counsell of God, and Judges, and Officers to execute judgement. Now in the 17. and 19. Chapters, and in the beginning of the 20. Chapter, it comes to passe that there the Holy Ghost tells us of a great company of Nations, as thick as the sands on the Sea for multitude come and invade *Iudah*; they come in a poore time for their own ends, for they were no sooner ready to invade the Church, but upon the prayers of *Iehosaphat* all their Souldiers turne one against anothers sides, and without any stroake of the King of *Iudah*, or his Souldiers, they fell as dirt

2 Chron.
20.

dirt upon the earth, and *perished as dung*, 2 Chron. 20. But surely had they found the State and Church in worse order, then it might have been feared what the issue of that warre would have been.

2 Chron.
30. 31.

Reade the like of *Hezekiah*, 2 Chron. 30. 31. hee spent his endeavour strongly in the reasoning of things amisse, both in the Church and Commonwealth, and in setting the Ordinances of God in their purity, saith the Text; But after these things, and the establishing thereof (marke that phrase) comes *Zenachrib* with an Hoast of

2 Chron.
32.

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one hundred eighty five
thousand against the peo-
ple; but alas, hee comes
in an evill time, for his
owne purpose, for hee
takes the Church of *God*
when it was in good or-
der, when they did seeke
Godsface, every one re-
forming his evill way,
and turning from the
corruption that was in
their hearts, and hands,
and we see all his purpo-
ses were broken, and da-
shed to pieces, and if there
had been tenne hundred
times ten thousand that
had come againe and a-
gain, they had broken
themselves against the
Church, as water is bro-
ken against a Rocke,
at

at that time.

But when the people of God are found in their failings, and in their sins, then the enemies that are strong, they prevail mightily, they goe on conquering with great successe, and all because there is something that God sees amisse in his owne servants; they have need to bee taught, and need to bee nurtured, to see their owne failings better, that so their iniquities might not be their owne ruine, nor hurt the place, or Commonwealth where they live in.

So long as ever the people of God did feare,
even

even the appearance of
evill this way, and the
skirts and circumstances
of superstition in this
kind, so long there was
never any such feare of
drawing on any such he-
resie in doctrine, any such
superstition, and Idola-
try, and false worship as
since hath invaded the
Church: but through the
inclination of Gods peo-
ple to tolerate them-
selves in this circum-
stance, and that circum-
stance leading to super-
stition, to corruption in
doctrine, or to the gui-
dance and government
of the affaires of the
Church, from that hath
sprung whatsoever dan-

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ger and feare it is that
of you are now exercise
with all.

And therefore certain
ly God first lookes
this, that you in the pr
sence of the Lord, see
more righteousnesse, a
more judgement, a
that wee humble o
soules more, each sou
of us before the Lo
that so there may not
that in Gods owne p
ple that may cause
thus to wheele about
whole fabrick of
State, as some times G
doth, and indeed oft.

For mine owne part
would not feare all
crying and hainous sin
that at any time, any

that you groan under, were
the hearts of Gods peo-
ple tender, our judge-
ments cleare, and our
hearts cleansed; were
the lives of Gods chosen
ones, *the meeke ones of the*
earth, set to such a frame
of spirit, as God some-
times gives, I would not
feare but that notwith-
standing all the sins you
see, there would bee a
speedy healing of all our
breaches: For it is as ea-
sie with God to change
the finnes of the time, as
the calamities of the
time. It is an easie mat-
ter with him to knock off
one instrument after ano-
ther, till he have brought
the whole body of the

K 2 Church

Church and State quietly and safely to such a blessed frame of things, as that the mountaine might bring peace, and the little hills joy to Gods people; And till Gods chosen ones take some care with their own hearts this way, that nothing may fume up from them, there will be little hope that ever you shall see the Common-wealth and the State in order, otherwise then your selves with grief perhaps see it.

Thinke not that the people of God are a small number, and are little considering others. In truth it may bee they are so in the eyes of men

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but I tell you they are all that God considers in the world, hee considers not all the world besides in comparison of them, and upon the healing of the judgement, or the practise of his servants, it is as usuall with God to do as great matters as ever were scene in the earth, and certainly he will doe as great matters in the world still for the healing of them. That is the first thing; Gods people must seriously advise with themselves.

Secondly, after they have healed themselves, they must mourne for the abominations of the place they live in, and say

2 Chron.

as Iehosaphat, Wee know
not what to doe, but our eyes
are to thee, O Lord. God
 oft holds his people in
 suspense (for this reason)
that their eyes might bee to
him, when they have or-
 dered their spirits aright,
to see the Holy One of Is-
rael: when their eyes are
 upon him, as the eye of a
 servant is upon his Ma-
 ster. and as the eye of a
 maid is on her Mistis,
 then hee will doe it, that
 we shall see his salvation;
 wee shall never need to
 lay our hands to the
 worke, God will worke
 it, you shall strike no
 stroake, for the battell is
 the Lords and not yours;
 God will provide that,
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though the enemies be as mountains, they shall be cleft as waters that fall from a steep rock. So much shall serve to have spoken of the first.

There is a second point remaines, let mee briefly handle it, and it is this : *That the possibility of the security of Gods people, (or if you will give me leave to speak it as I desire to doe with that reverence as becommeth the word, take it thus :) The halfe promises of God for the security, or touching the security of his people is a sufficient reason, and ought to be an effectuall motive to us to renew our repentance, faith and obedience, and*
K 4 *patience.*

patience. Let me shew you all out of the words.

First, *halfe promises* I call such as this in the Text, *It may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lords wrath*: for there are two things that goe to the accomplishment of a promise:

One is the power of him that made it.

The other is his will in performing it.

God tels us of his power that it is possible, it may be done, *It may be*; he tels us not certainly, *In hiding I will hide you*, but *It may be*; that is onely an expression of his power: and you have many such expressions in Scripture,

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you may take notice of them if you please, and you shall find it helpfull in opening of many Scriptures: you shall find these *halfe promises* expressed three wayes in Scripture.

Sometimes God onely expresseth his *power*, and not his *will* at all. As whē *Amaziah* asked the Prophet what should become of his hundred talents of silver that hee had given for souldiers, *2 Chron. 25. 9.* The King had hired a hundred thousand souldiers of Israel, with an hundred talents of silver, that they might fight for him. The Prophet and God tooooke it ill that

*2 Chron.
25. 9.*

K 5

he

hee should hire such kind of men, God is not at peace with all: and therefore send them home, saith he: *but what shall I doe for the silver?* (saith the King) all is lost, they will never give it mee againe. Take no care, saith the Prophet, *God is able to give it thee againe*: this is a half promise, because here is an expression of Gods power, but not of his will.

In like manner S. Paul exhorts the Corinthians that they would be bountifull to the poore Saints at *Ierusalem*; why so? Saith he, *My God is able to fulfill all your necessities according to his rich pleasure,*

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sure, 2 Cor. 8. 9. Here is a halfe promise, and the Apostle thinks it a sufficient encouragement to them.

Sometimes God expresseth these promises another way, with words of contingency and uncertainty, as when hee saith in the Text, *It may be, or Who can tell whether the Lord will returne, and leave a blessing behind him? Ioel 2. 14. Or as there is the like of Nineveh, Who knowes whether the Lord will returne and repent, that we perish not? Ionah 3. 8. 9. Who knows? Who can tell?* these are words of contingencie.

Sometimes God expresseth

2 Cor. 8. 9

Ioel 2. 14.

Ion. 3. 8, 9.

presseth these halfe promises with a condition, with a three-fold condition.

Num. 14.8

2 Sam. 15.
25, 26.

Sometimes on Gods part, *If the Lord love us, and delight in us, he will bring us unto that good land, Num. 14.8. If the Lord take pleasure in mee, and if I have found favour with him, he will bring me to the Arke, that I may see it and the Tabernacle, 2 Sam. 15. 25, 26.* Here is a promise with a condition of favour on Gods part.

Sometimes the condition is on our part, *If thy sonnes walke in my statutes and doe them, &c. 1 Kings 9. 4, 5, 6.* This is a promise

mise with condition on our part.

Sometimes the condition depends upon the part of the thing promised; as when God promi-
seth a thing in case it be good for us, *And no good thing will hee with-hold,*
Psal. 84. 11.

Psal. 84. 11

Now all these kind of promises, whether God expresse his power only, or both his *power* and his *will* in a contingent manner, or if God promise with a condition on his part, or on our part, or on the part of the things themselves, all these I account *halfe promises*, because they are not absolute and certaine to us.

Againe,

Againe, all of them are such as ought to be effectuell motives to stir us up to all duties.

For first, let me prove it from the Text. When *Zephany* exhorts them to seeke the Lord, that is the duty of repentance; for no man will seeke the Lord, but he that feeles a want of him: no man seekes but for that that he feeles the need of in some measure, either altogether, or in part; therefore hee exhorts them to *repentance*, and hee exhorts them to *faith* in their repentance; for no man seekes the Lord, till by faith we have found him; repentance seeks him, but seeking

seeking by faith findes him.

And to seek judgement and meeknesse, implies a practice of the duties of obedience; *judgement* and *meeknesse*, that is, patience and mildnesse of spirit in all dangers that befall us. Seek all these: upon what ground? *It may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lords wrath.* So that you see this is and ought to be a sufficient reason, or else the Lord would not use it: the holy Ghost useth this reason, who cannot but reason divinely and effectually, and therefore surely the reason is forcible & good, if it be rightly apprehended. But

But I might bring many examples for all. Doth not *Joel* exhort the people to turne to the Lord with fasting, weeping, & mourning? *Who can tell*, saith he, *whether the Lord will leave a blessing behind him*? Hee exhorts them to the duty of repentance and humiliation upon this ground, upon a halfe promise, *Who can tell, &c.* So concerning the *silver*, *2 Chron. 25. God is able to give thee more*, therefore thou must obey. *God is able to doe it*, he doth not say he *will* doe it, and it may be he never did, (for the Kings heart was not right with the Lord) but he is *able* to doe it, and he would

2 Chr. 25.

would have his will fulfilled, whether hee did or no.

And so the King of *Nineveh*, he turned from his evill wayes, and exhorted all the people to doe so, to repent and reforme. Why? *Who can tell but that the Lord will repent of the evill? Ionah* 3. 8.

Ionah 3.8.

It is a wondrous help to the faith of a Christian, when he sees there is a power in God to helpe him: for *Iehosaphat* works upon that, *Our eyes are upon thee, and thou hast given this Nation to Abraham, &c. and it is all one with God to save with many or few, therefore wee waite upon*

upon thee for deliv-
rance.

Exod. 32.

So *Moses*, he turnes to
God, and renewes his hu-
miliation before him
with a *peradventure I shal
find favour at the hands of
God, Exod. 32.*

Dan. 3. 17.

And for the patience
of Gods people, and their
constancy and obedience
together, we have a spe-
ciall example, *Dan. 3. 17.*
*Oh King, wee are not care-
full to answer thee in this
matter : our God whom we
serve is able to deliver us,
and he will deliver us out
of thy hands : but if not,
&c. Marke, they begin to
conceive a possibility that
he could, and some incli-
nation of his will towards
it,*

it, but *if not*, know that we will not fall downe before thine Image. They strengthen themselves in their courage and obedience, by faith in the Almighty.

The servants of God have ever been wrought upon, though they have had but a conditionall promise, though they have had but a *peradventure* for their encouragement, *It may be, it is possible*, though they have had no more but a *possibility*, it hath stayed their faith, and renewed their repentance, and quickned their obedience, and framed them to patience & meeknesse, and all holy sub-

submission upon this ground, *It may be* the Lord will doe this and that for us, thus returning to him.

Why halfe
promises
are so effe-
ctuell.

What might be the reason why this expref-
fion of God, when hee
makes but a *halfe promise*,
is and ought to be such
an effectuell argument to
stay the soule?

Reaf. 1.

The reason of it brief-
ly is taken, First from the
true meaning of God,
when he expreffeth him-
felfe thus: though he tell
them, *It may be you shall
be hid*, yet he meanes you
shall *certainly* be hid, and
I will undoubtedly deli-
ver you. For though hee
speaks thus ambiguously,
and

and accordingly reports it to the consciences of his people, and leaves them in suspence, that they shall not know what good hee will doe with them, at the least till they have purged out those evils that have provoked him to displeasure, and have humbled themselves for their failings.

Yet the very truth is, whensoever God speaks, *It may be, that very may be* is a certainty in the language of the holy Ghost: So *Ioel* interprets it, *Ioel* 2. 12, 13. to the 18. *Turne to the Lord with all your hearts, with fasting, weeping, and mourning: Who can tell whether the Lord will*

Ioel 2. 12,
13.

will returne, and repent him of the evill ? Marke it, there he speaks as if it were certain, and expresth himselfe in the next words positively and peremptorily, He will return and be mercifull, and leave a blessing behind him.

For this word *It may be*, as good Interpreters expound it, is not a voice of *doubt*, but a word of giving : a good intimation and hope of encouragement in what God will doe: so that if the servants of God did but beleieve, it would reach that that themselves desire : For consider brethren, who it is that speaks, and to whom, it is the Lord God,

God, to his humble meek ones ; and it is no more than if a father should say to his child thus: Go doe this and that, labour for mee in this and that service, and *it may be* I will not onely pardon such a failing, wherein you have provoked mee, but I will bestow such a Mannor or Lordship on you, *it may be*.

The child takes this intimation as not spoken in vaine, for though this word be such as a father may break without falsehood, yet he cannot doe it without dishonour. If he speak thus to his child, I will pardon your former failings, and give you
this,

this, *it may be*, when hee gives him but a hint of it, the father cannot go back from that word, and not part from his honour withall, though he may doe it without falsehood.

And the reason of that is, because the heart of the child sets his eye upon the promise of his father, and in vertue of that he workes; and for his father to give him a hint, and to make an overture of doing that which hee never means to doe, were very strange. The child still presumes that the father ever meanes better than he speaks, whether he threaten, or promise; he

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hee ever presumes, if he bid him do this and that, and hee doth it, then certainly the father will not goe backe,

So in this, God may goe back and not falsifie his word, but he cannot without some dishonour to his great Name; For God to set his children upon such a course of meekenesse, of righteousnesse, and of justice, to seeke him, and expect comfort from him, if hee speake thus to his children; If you doe so, and so, *It may bee you shall bee bid, &c* For him to set them upon such a course, with such encouragement, and then never meane to

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 cause these *halfe promises*
 are certaine promises of
 sure deliverance: Let the
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 when it will, if Gods
 people set themselves to
 seeke the Lord, and to seek
 judgement, when they
 have sought him, though
 he say, *It may bee*, before
 they goe to the worke,
 yet when they have done
 this, *it may bee*,
 will prove a certaine hi-
 ding place, a sure refuge
 to them.

Now a second Reason,
 why it ought to be a mo-
 tive

Reas. 2.

tive is this ; Because of our owne undeserving of any promise from God, so that if wee may have but the least hint from God of any mercy, it ought sufficiently to work upon us ; as the King of Syria and his servants said one to another, *Behold, we have heard that the Kings of Israel are mercifull Kings, It may be they will save our lives, let us goe with ropes about our necks, and beseech him to shew favour to Benhadad, &c.* What answer received they : *Is my brother Benhadad alive ?* they tooke hold of that word presently, *my brother Benhadad,* they laid

laid hold upon that, the least hint served their turne; why? because they deserved hanging.

So when the servants of *God* come before him, in the shame and guilt of their frailties, and consider how little they have deserved at Gods hands, how justly they have merited his wrath that hee threatneth to a Nation; when they have the least hint, so much as, *It may bee I will hide you*, that is sufficient, if there be no more: In the strength of that wee ought to walke all our dayes constantly, seeking meekenesse, and righteousness, that wee may be hid in the day of

Reas. 3.

the Lords wrath.

Thirdly, consider the Nature of God; God declares himselfe to Moses, to bee abundant in goodnesse, and in truth; abundance is not onely when a vessell is full of water, but when it runneth over the banks; The Sea is abundant in water when it overflowes the banks, and surrounds all the Countreys where it runs; Gods goodnesse is not bounded with the truth of his promise, for as hee is good in promising, so hee is not onely true in performing, but hee is abundant in truth; that is, hee performes all his promise and more.

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God say, *It may bee*, hee need not performe his promise, for his truths sake, but hee will abundantly performe it, for his Names sake, for his goodnesse sake, for his wisedomes sake that knowes no bottome, nor bounds; when he comes to deale with his servants and children, to whom he hath made so many sweet promises in Christ he knowes no limits.

This may serve therefore, *first* to be a notable encouragement to all such poore Christians, as can get little hold of any promise of God; All that ever they can reach to is this, that their conscience

Use 1.

upholds them with ; *It may be God will have mercy upon my soule that I perish not ;* It may bee hee will accept my prayers, and the prayers of many of his servants, that commend my estate to God, that my soule perish not in the nethermost hell ; It may bee I shall finde peace and pardon of my finnes, but it is so strange for me to expect it, such an unworthy wretch am I of such a favour at Gods hands, that I dare not expect it ; but who can tell whether the Lord will have mercy on my soul ?

I tell thee brother, if God have reported this to thee, *it may be*, he will
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formerly framed thee to
meeknesse of heart: So
as let G O D doe as hee
please with thee, yet thou
resolvest to submit thy
neck to the yoake; let
God doe what hee will,
thou art meeke in heart,
and humble in spirit, thy
conscience is tender, and
bruised, and sensible of
thy former failings; and
yet notwithstanding all
thy humiliation, and feare
of Gods displeasure; all
thy sorow of soule, and
shame that thou hast ta-
ken to heart; notwith-
standing all the care that
thou hast taken in the use
of the meanes for inward

peace, yet little is attained, and thou still tremblest to thinke what will become of that poore soule of thine ; who can tell but that the Lord in time will bee mercifull to thee, that thy soule may live.

I say, goe home and goe with this comfort in thy heart, God that hath said, *It may bee*, will certainly make it good ; Go on and seeke the Lord still, and seeke meeknesse, and rightconsnesse, and judgements still, and feare it not, that *may bee*, will be a certaine deliverance, a certaine pardon of sin, a certaine righteousness, and judgement.

Lord

Lord saith the *Leper*,
Mark. i. 40. If thou wilt
thou canst make me cleane;
why saith our Saviour, *I*
will, be thou cleane. If once
a soule come in a sence of
its owne leprosie, and lay
open the nakednesse, and
basenesse of the disease
before God (the sinfulness
of it, I meane) for
the leprosie was but a
type of the contagious
spreading of sinne, let us
come and shew our con-
tagion before God, our
filthy, loathsome, sprea-
ding evils that our soules
are corrupted with, lay
them open before God,
and tell him, That hee is
able to cleanse thee,
there wants nothing but
a word

Mar. i. 40.

a word of grace from him to doe it, and he will speake to thee, as he did to the leper; *I will be thou cleane*; thou mayest goe home with that word cheared, if it bee but a *halfe promise*, lay hold upon it; If God speake but the least hint of comfort, and though thou comcest with a rope about thy neck, acknowledging thy just desert, yet let it bee a sufficient stay to thy heart, to encourage thee; he speaketh that that hee would not intimate, in the least kind, if he did not meane to bee as good as his word; but he is abundantly incōparably more; he

he is abundant in goodnesse and truth, as well as faithfull in goodnesse and truth.

For a second Use, this may serve to stirre up all the children of God, in a speciall manner, to *seeke the Lord*, to *seeke righteousness*, and *judgement*, and *seeke meeknesse*, and that in these times ; If these be the times wherein we ask, *What shall wee now doe ? or what doe you thinke the Lord will doe with us ? or what will be the issue of these things ?* If you have occasion to ask such questions in this or in after ages, that you may live in ; Behold, I say, what the counsell of the

Use. 2.

the holy Ghost is, *Seek the Lord, all ye mecke of the earth*, that thinke you have wrought judgement and have indeed carried things well at home, and in the countries wherein you live: If you have wrought judgement, and meeknesse, and righteousness, marke what the Lord presseth upon you; *Seek the Lord while hee may bee found*, seeke him more, bee sensible of the want of Gods presence.

Oh the blessed, and comfortable, and glorious presence of God, that sometimes you found when you looked first after him! Have you not found a decay of the
grace

grace of God since, or at least of comfort, that you are short of that, that before time you enjoyed? If you feele the least measure of want, or if you feele no want but continue in your first standing (which is few Christians case) for you never see the face of *God* so clearly but you may see it more, you never received such a measure of grace but you have need of more, to pacifie, and to purifie your conscience, to strengthen grace, & help you to doe that that God calls you to performe.

Seek the Lord still therefore, and seek righteousness, content not your selves with

with that measure of holiness that you are come to, but that your heart and life may be more righteous; there may be many wayes of righteousness that you have not yet sought for, therefore seek righteousness more. And what though you bee already growne to heavenly meekness of spirit, and amiableness and sweetness of heart, so as you can moderate your anger and your heat, and griefe, and your high thoughts, and are growne meek and lowe in your own esteem, and finde rest to your soules thereby.

Behold, I say, seeke meekenesse still, you will have

have need of al that ever
you have attained to, or
that you can receive; you
know not what need you
may have of all; seeke
the Lord, that hee may
strengthen you to *do* well,
and to *suffer* ill; that hee
may inlarge you above
your selves; seeke the
Lord, seeke righteousness,
seek meekness, be seekers
still, *Psal. 24. This is the*
generation of them that
seeke him; Jacob is called
a *seeker*. The true *Israel*,
and the true *Israelites* are
all but seekers; Seeke the
Lord and his strength,
and seek his face for ever
and ever; be of the seek-
ing hand. When Christi-
ans begin to bee full of
God

Psal. 24:

God, then they are empty of that which is carnall, and worldly, and unsavoury; when there are lesse searchings of spirit, and seekings of heart after God, then they begin to grow worldly, and sensuall, and full of themselves: therefore seeke the Lord still, and seeke his strength, not onely the strength of his ordinances in your owne hearts, but seeke the strength and the power of God in all your wayes and undertakings.

Now that you may be encouraged by him to all the duties that hee calls you to in your places, that you may indeed seeke
righteous.

righteousnesse; seek the true meaning of Gods righteous will, and all the waies of his holy Commandements that he hath appointed you to walk in, both in his own Ordinances, and in your particular callings; Frame your hearts to such a milde and meeke spirit, that you may adorne the Gospel of Christ, & not be left to that sowernesse and roughnesse of spirit, as sometimes Gods people are; seek meekness, who can tell, *It may bee*, in the strength of that overture of Gods promise, is a more certaine assurance of your estate then all the promises, and all the assurance, and all the bonds of the sonnes of men whatsoever.

Thirdly,

Vse 3.

Thirdly, let me here exhort you, to be in a special sort careful the more to beleeve all the promises of God, the more certainly they bee expressed. There are abundance of promises in the word of GOD that speake affirmatively without any possibilities, or respects of *peradventure*; many times God speaks punctually and plainly what he will doe. There be sundry blessings that he promiseth, (as you may reade, I cannot inlarge them in particular) lay hold of them; If God speak by way of doubt, yet you may take them for certaine, walking after God, in seeking his will, God will make them all certainly good

good to thy soule.

To conclude, If these *halfe promises*, bee such a certaine foundation of peace and security to Gods people, then you see here how far off they are from seeking *God* that find no comfort in religious wayes, that have no pleasure in seeking after *God*; It is not a vain course which the Cōmon-wealth and this Kingdom have been wont to take many times, to be carefull of settling Religion, and doing good offices to Religion, in the first place. I tell you, it is not a complement, it is not a trifle this, why? because according as the Church is, so stands the Cōmon-wealth, and whole Lands and Kingdomes are wheeled about
for

for the Churches sake; therefore it is not a vain course.

Tell not mee of any thing in the world that you may build upon, except you settle your foundation upon the Church of God, for all the world were not able to stand else, not the *Roman* liberties; what more freedom then to be free of the City of *Rome*? though in some things they wanted that freedom that (thanks bee to *God*) you enjoy, yet notwithstanding all their liberties, what became of them since, were they secured from forrain enemies? No such matter, why? because they wanted the prosperity of the Church amongst them; therefore how should peace hold themselves.

selves, or others? It is not then in vaine to begin reformation here.

Well, thus much let me say further; Doe but consider how far every man shall bee from getting a hiding place from Gods wrath that doth not seek *righteousnesse*, and *meeknesse*; all that they can get from God is but this, *It may bee you shall bee hid in the day of the Lords wrath*. What then will be the lot of those that obey not the Gospel of God? that seeke not *righteousnesse*, and *meeknesse* at all, what will be the case of the? without any *may be*, assuredly except Gods people save the soules of such, and their bodies & states by renewing their covenant and standing in.